

REMARKS/DISCUSSION:

This Amendment B is being filed within two months after the shortened statutory period for response that ended on September 6, 2006. Accordingly, a Petition for a Two-Month Extension of Time is attached hereto.

By this Amendment, claims 1, 6, 10, 13, 14, 16-19 and 21-23 are pending in this application. Claims 2-5, 7-9, 11-12, 15 and 20 have been canceled.

Amendments to the claims are as follows:

- i) Claim 1 incorporates the subject matter of objected-to claim 3;
- ii) Claim 6 incorporates the subject matter of objected-to claim 9;
- iii) Claim 10 is amended to now be dependent upon claim 6;
- iv) Claim 19 incorporates the subject matter of objected-to claim 20;
- v) New claim 21 incorporates the subject matter of claim 1 and objected-to claim 5;
- vi) New claim 22 incorporates the subject matter of claims 6 and 11 and objected-to claim 12;
- vii) New claims 23 incorporates the subject matter of claim 6 and objected-to claim 15;
- viii) Claims 13-14 have been amended to be dependent upon claim 22; and
- ix) Claims 16 and 18 have been amended to be dependent upon claim 23.

Amendment and/or cancellation of claims is not to be construed as a dedication to the public of any of the subject matter of the claims previously presented. Further, Applicant(s) reserves the right to prosecute the subject matter of such claims in continuation and/or divisional applications.

Applicant has carefully studied the outstanding Office Action. By this Amendment B, the rejected base claims have been amended to incorporate allowable subject matter in order to place all of the pending claims in a condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration and allowance of the application are respectfully requested.

CONCLUSION

Applicants submit that in view of the amendments, the rejections have been overcome and that the invention is now patentable over the cited prior. The Examiner is respectfully requested to reconsider all rejections and pass this case to issue.

Should any minor points remain prior to issuance of a Notice of Allowance, the Examiner is requested to telephone the undersigned at the below-listed telephone number.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any additional fees, which may be required to Account No. 10-0750/END-5031/VEK.

Respectfully submitted,

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